

Dear Friends,

I did not want to have to write this email, but at the moment I have no other choice. I am in serious and imminent danger of becoming one of the statistics in the ongoing recession, namely being out of house and home and frankly losing everything.

As some of you are aware, four months ago (two weeks before Christmas), my pay on my current job (which is transcribing in-production videos of Reality TV shows) was cut in half! They didn't even tell us. They let us find out. I found out when I received an email from a co-worker (who has the same job) titled "Help!" She had just submitted her invoice and was told her calculations were incorrect. They weren't. We had explicit instructions on how to calculate our work. About an hour later, I received an email from the company that said, "We're having an issue with a transcriber, and want to get everyone on the same page." Of course I pretended I didn't already know. The email said it was supposed to have been that way all along. Uh huh. Like they didn't check our work for the past several years. I know for a fact they did. Now, at any other time in my life and a different economy, I would have said, "Would you please go fuck yourself," and walked out. But in this economy, that was impossible, so I put up with it, and immediately started looking for another job. This was a race against time. I needed something to happen quickly, but despite immense and intensive effort on my part, it hasn't. Simple as that.

I quickly discovered several sad facts of life of seeking employment in the 21st century. No one responds! I am not alone in this. About a month ago, I contacted a friend of a friend, a writer with several books out who worked for one of the publishing houses in NYC, asking him if he knew of anything or had any ideas. He responded that he had been laid off two and a half years ago after 26 years, and had been searching ever since to NO RESPONSE! I'm a member of several writing groups on the business social networking site Linked In. Among the topics of discussion is, "Why do I get no response to my resume?" Frankly, finding a job was a lot easier when you could look in the newspaper, call up, get an interview (usually within days, if not immediately), and you either got the job or didn't.

I can safely say that in the past four months I have applied for more jobs than I have in my entire life. Some were jobs I really wanted. Some were jobs I knew I'd be great at, and some were jobs just go get a job. But these days, experience, accomplishment mean nothing. One of the jobs was being a courier. I was a courier for eight years. I drove from 500 to 800 miles a week, covering an area to NY (and

farther) on the North, Harrisburg to the West, DC and farther to the South, and well, the ocean to the East. That night I said to my cousin, "How much do you want to bet I get no response?" In addition to innumerable job boards, temp and employment agencies, I've checked web sites of companies I liked to work for, written people who do work I'm interested in, and more. In other words, taken initiative.

But meanwhile, the work the company I've worked for has slowed to a trickle, and a week ago they informed me that there would be very little work. A show I probably made at least \$5,000 (it not more) doing last year, they are now doing in-house. That means they're either giving the work to interns, and have hired no people at a lesser rate than they're paying me. (If the people they're paying would bother to figure it out, they'd find they're probably getting less than minimum wage, but that's not my problem). In March, what I paid out in simple cost of living expenses was five times what I brought in. This entire year, I have not been able to do anything. I can't get things I need let alone things I want.

I am probably going to have to apply for welfare which I'm hesitant to do because I tried to apply for food stamps earlier this year (using their online system) and it got bungled so severely, getting me benefits I didn't want, not giving me the benefit and I did want, and screwing up one benefit I already had, that it took almost two months to straighten it out. The bureaucracy was so utterly inept, it was enough to make me a Republican. (That will never happen.)

But there is some light starting to appear. Last week, a Facebook friend asked if I could edit an article they'd written for a magazine, offering to pay me a more than decent amount. I did. They were more than pleased. Asides from making some much needed cash, it restored some of my confidence. Four months of rejection can do things to your confidence you don't want to think about. At the exact same time that happened, someone finally responded positively about a job, telling me I'm a top candidate. We've since exchanged several emails, and I'm feeling pretty positive about this. Unfortunately, the job is part time, but it could lead to something permanent. Interestingly, this is a job I tried to get (meeting through someone else) four years ago. Even crazier it was based on the briefest of cover letters: "I'm interested in this position." In addition, I am in negotiations for another job, a job I thought I was going to get months ago. It's a long story I won't bore you with, but I'm dealing with the president of the company as opposed to a human resources person, so I'm sort of hopeful.

A couple of other things. Last year, I was forced by one of the major banks into declaring bankruptcy even though they'd always been paid and paid more than the minimum balance, and on time. I was just starting to get back on some sort of stable ground when this pay cut happened. Obviously, I needed things to stay stable for a little while, but luck was not with me. And while one bank in particular has been showering me with credit card offers, for obvious reasons, I want to stay from that as long as possible.

As most of you are aware, I've been in critical situations before. Almost 22 years ago. I was severely injured in a robbery while waiting in line at a gas station. Almost every bone in my face was broken from eye sockets on down, and my jaw was separated from my face. It took almost a year before I could open my mouth wide enough for a dentist to correct other damage, and various other operations went on for eight years. What most of you do not know is that while I was in the hospital initially, I was diagnosed with one of the worst and most serious illnesses you can get, one that is (so far) incurable and will eventually kill me. So while I was recovering from those injuries, I also had this to contend with. At the time, I did not expect to be alive right now, and so far I have not had a single symptom of this disease, though one of the many drugs I had to take came close to killing me seven and a half years ago, and put me in the hospital for two weeks which these days is a long time to be in a hospital. Bill Clinton had his bypass surgery while I was in the hospital, and was in and out before I was released. However, one of the things I'm supposed to avoid is stress, and obviously I've been in a continual stressful situation for this entire year.

The truly baffling thing in all this I was the best they had at what I was doing. I was told this early on by the owner, and then repeatedly over the years by the producers the people I did the work for. A few days before this pay cut happened, I was picking up work, and one of the producers was outside getting a smoke, and as I got out of my car, she said, "Best transcriber ever!" A couple of months before that, I was working on a special show where the transcripts were highly detailed and involved, and the person in charge only wanted me to work on them. My only contact with this person was through email, but as the show was nearing its conclusion, one day he heard I was in the building, and he came out to the lobby as I left to personally thank me. Along with the fact that last year was their busiest year with more shows than they ever had in the time I worked there (with one being a hit), I really had no reason to think this would happen.

But right now, I need to make it through this month, and I am simply stretched as far as I can go. As I said, for the entire month of March, I made what I used to make in half of one week. That was it.

I don't want to lose my home. I don't want to have to move to I don't know where. There finally are some hopeful signs. I realize things are tight for everybody, but if any of you can help in any way, I need it.

Peter